

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 380 560

CE 068 395

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TITLE Macomb Reading Partners Research Report.
INSTITUTION Macomb County Library, Mt. Clemens, MI.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED),
Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 1 Jul 90
CONTRACT R167A90515
NOTE 105p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC05 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Basic Education; *Adult Literacy; Adult
Programs; Illiteracy; *Literacy Education; Program
Effectiveness; Program Evaluation; Reading
Improvement; Reading Instruction; *Tutoring; Tutors;
*Volunteer Training
IDENTIFIERS *Automobile Workers

ABSTRACT

A study evaluated Macomb Reading Partners (MRP), the tutoring program of the Macomb Literacy Project. It researched the effectiveness of literacy training and its impact on the lives of a target group of 30 automotive workers. Data sources were a structured interview, the Word Opposites Test of the Botel Reading Inventory (1962), and participant files. Findings indicated the mean gain in reading grade-level equivalency per month for the sample was .204. Participants in the 40-58 age range showed significantly higher average monthly gains in grade-level equivalency than those below age 40. The last school grade completed did not appear to be predictive of either reading grade-level equivalency at the point of entry into the tutoring program or the average monthly gain that could be expected. The average monthly gain in reading grade-level equivalency for the sample was significantly higher for those tutored for 10 months or less than for those tutored for 13 months or more. When participants described the reading strategies they tried to use, their comments were very supportive of tutors' methods. The participants reported frequent and diverse application of newly acquired literacy skills to their life roles. Participation in the tutoring program was highly related to positive feelings. (Appendixes include the following: interview protocol, and the paper, "Life Transitions and Trigger Events Leading to Participation in a Volunteer Literacy Program" by James E. Snoddy. Contains 11 references. (YLB)

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ED 380 560

MACOMB READING PARTNERS RESEARCH REPORT

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July 1, 1990

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GRANT NUMBER: R167A90515

PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE: October 1, 1989 - September 30, 1990

NOTE: This research report is Attachment L of the Final Project Report.

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Macomb Literacy Partners Research Report

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I. INTRODUCTION

This section of the report describes the purposes and background of this research project, and describes the setting of the study, the Macomb Literacy Project, Inc. The Macomb Literacy Project is the program governing body. The name Macomb Reading Partners has just recently been adopted, at student suggestion, to represent the tutorial aspect. Throughout this study, Macomb Reading Partners (MRP) will be used to refer to the tutoring program.

A. Purposes of the Project

This research was initiated on October 1, 1989 and completed about September 1, 1990. It was supported by a grant under the United States Library Services and Construction Act. As stated in the proposal for funding, the general purpose of the work undertaken was to evaluate "the effectiveness of literacy training and the impact it has on the lives of a target group of automotive workers." Specifically, the objectives of the study were to:

1. Measure the increase in reading ability of the adult participants in the program,
2. Document changes in the work life of the participants including promotions, job re-training, participation in union activities and others,
3. Document personal changes of the participants, including expressions of self confidence and independence, and
4. Document changes in family life, including involvement in children's schooling, participation in community activities and changes in forms of recreation.

It is hoped that the results of the study will provide evidence that the tutoring program produces desirable results and is cost effective. It is expected that the results will be useful in an effort the increase local .

community awareness of the problems of illiteracy and of Macomb Reading Partners through disseminating selected findings of the study throughout the immediate community. The results of the study will also be disseminated to the academic and professional communities interested in adult literacy by means of one or more research articles

B. Setting for the Study: Macomb Reading Partners (1)

The Macomb Literacy Project was jointly initiated by the Library Cooperative of Macomb and the Utica School Adult Education Program in July, 1984. The name Macomb Reading Partners was added in September, 1989 at adult new reader suggestion to help remove the stigma of illiteracy. The headquarters for the agency are at 16480 Hall Road, Mt. Clemens, MI 48044.

The primary mission of Macomb Reading Partners is to train volunteer tutors to work on a one-to-one basis with adults with low reading ability and to provide needed support for these tutors and adult students. More specifically, the goals of the Agency are as follows:

- To provide literacy training to adults at or below the fifth grade level;
- To raise community awareness about the problem of illiteracy;
- To establish a firm base of support, including a continuing financial commitment, throughout the community so that local resources and agencies become an integral part of the program; and
- To demonstrate the overall effectiveness of MLP.

Financial support for Macomb Reading Partners historically has come from a wide variety of sources, with some of the more recent sources including the Michigan Department of Education, the U.S. Library Service and Construction Act, the U.S. Job Training and Partnership Act, State of Michigan budget appropriations, Macomb County Government appropriations, The Skillman Foundation, local businesses and private individuals.

(1) Much of the information reported in the section was gathered from internal documents and published reports of Macomb Reading Partners, and through interviews and informal conversations with program staff members.

The current director of Macomb Reading Partners is Marsha DeVergilio, who holds the BA in special education and the MA in Reading. Her teaching experience includes both K-12 schools and adult education. Active in literacy efforts in various ways, DeVergilio is Literacy Facilitator, Region 1, for the Michigan Department of Education, co-author of LITSTART (Second Edition), a certified tutor trainer through Michigan Literacy, Inc., a member of the Macomb County Inter-Agency Council, second Chairperson of the Macomb Division for United Community Services, member of the Michigan Reading Association, member of and program management consultant to Laubach Literacy Action, and a member of Literacy Volunteers of America.

1. Program Statistics

It is estimated that there are approximately 74,000 illiterate adults in the Macomb Reading Partners service area (Macomb County). During 1988, approximately 600 tutors served 489 adult students. By early 1990, there were more than 550 teams of tutors and adult students working together under the auspices of the program. Since 1984 when the program began, more than 1,240 tutors have been trained through the program, and over 1,200 adults have been assisted through tutoring.

The staff of Macomb Literacy Partners regularly maintains records of the demographic characteristics of the adults served by the program. The following table (Table 1) summarizes some of these characteristics.

Table 1

Macomb Reading Partners Student Demographics
1988 and 1989 Combined

A. Gender

Male 58% Female 42%

B. Age

<u>Age</u>	<u>Percent</u>
18-19	6%
20-29	32%
30-39	28%
40-49	14%
50-59	11%
60 and over	4%
Unknown	<u>5%</u>
	100%

C. Employment Status

<u>Status</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Employed	60%
Unemployed	39%
Unknown	<u>1%</u>
	100%

D. Educational Status

<u>Last Grade Completed</u>	<u>Percent</u>
0	8%
1-5	5%
6-8	14%
9-11	23%
12	44%
12 +	5%
Unknown	<u>1%</u>
	100%

The heart of the Macomb Reading Partners is the volunteer tutors. Prior to being trained for tutoring, every volunteer makes a commitment to provide at least one year of instruction for an adult student. These volunteers provide more than 30,000 hours of instruction in 1989. The average number of hours donated per tutor was approximately 87. Table 2 displays some of the demographic characteristics of these tutors for 1988 and 1989 combined.

Table 2

Macomb Reading Partners Tutor Demographics
1988 and 1989 Combined

A. Gender

Male	18%	Female	82%
------	-----	--------	-----

B. Age

<u>Age</u>	<u>Percent</u>
18-19	1%
20-29	22%
30-39	20%
40-49	19%
50-59	14%
60 and over	18%
Unknown	6%
	<u>100%</u>

C. Education

<u>Last Grade Completed</u>	<u>Percent</u>
College Graduate Plus	12%
College Graduate	27%
College Student	3%
12th Grade Plus	25%
12 Grade	26%
Less than 12th	2%
Unknown	5%
	<u>100%</u>

2. Program Procedures

Adult students are enrolled in the Macomb Reading Partners tutoring program through the following procedures:

- A. Referrals are received from agency or through self referral, usually by phone.
- B. Preliminary testing and an interview are conducted to determine the reading level, as well as appropriate materials and methods.
- C. A tutor is selected based on geography, times available for tutoring and the student's needs.
- D. The tutor is contacted, sites suggested, and tutorial package delivered.
- E. The tutor reports to the agency office after the first tutoring session.
- F. Monitoring begins by program staff, including periodic assessments of progress.
- G. Referrals are made to other educational programs upon completion with Michigan Reading Partners.

Based upon testing results, a newly assigned tutor is supplied with information about which techniques and materials best suit the student's needs.

Each tutor is contacted on a regular basis to keep the tutor aware of the concern and commitment of the literacy program. A formalized process allowing for additional support of "at risk" students has recently been implemented.

To further assist tutors, a quarterly newsletter is sent with news and teaching tips. Bi-monthly tutor workshops to upgrade tutor skills are also held. During 1989, a Student Council was formed. This council meets bi-monthly and allows students the opportunity to share accomplishments, personal goals and concerns.

Adult students are routinely re-assessed at about six month intervals. The instrument used is the Word Opposites Test of the Botel Reading Inventory (1962). The Botel and other tests are initially administered by a trained

member of the program staff. Thereafter, the Botel is administered by the tutors. Scoring and recording are done by program staff members.

II. Methodology

This section describes the methodology of the study, and also sets forth specific procedures followed. Research questions are stated, the tentative and actual time lines are shown, the population and sampling procedures are described, data gathering procedures and instrument development are discussed, and data analysis techniques are developed.

A. Time Line for the Study

Early in the work, a tentative time line for planning, conducting and reporting the results of the study was developed. This tentative time line is shown in Figure A.

Figure A

Macomb Reading Partners Research Project

Tentative Time Line

<u>Calendar</u>			<u>Activity</u>
1.	October 89		1. Preliminary planning, specify research questions, develop and identify instruments, pilot testing, and initial data collection.
	November 89		
	December 89		
2.	January 90		2. Analysis of initial data, prepare a preliminary report.
	February 90		
	March 90		
3.	April 90		3. Complete data collection.
	May 90		
	June 90		
	July 90		
4.	August 90		4. Complete of final report, consult with program staff as needed.
	September 90		

While the work of the study remained relatively consistent with the tentative time line, there were minor variations from the tentative schedule. All of the work planned for October, November and December of 1989 was completed during that period, except that instead of the 25 interviews planned only 14 were conducted. See Figure B. Most of the interviews were scheduled for Saturdays for a number of reasons, the major one being the participants were more likely to be available on Saturdays. This extended the data collection period into January, 1990 and through April, 1990. Data analysis and the preparation of the final report were done prior to September 30, 1990 as scheduled. The actual time line for the work of the project is shown in Figure B.

Figure B

Dates of Participant Interviews

<u>Date</u>	<u>Number of Participants Interviewed</u>	N-32
August 9, 1989	2	
October 28, 1989	3	
November 2, 1989	1	
November 11, 1989	5	
December 2, 1989	3	
January 20, 1990	3	
February 10, 1990	2	
February 24, 1990	5	
April 7, 1990	6	
April 24, 1990	<u>2</u>	
	32	

Figure C

Macomb Reading Partners Research Project

Actual Time Line

	<u>Calendar</u>	<u>Activity</u>
1.	October 89 November 89 December 89	1. Preliminary planning, specify research questions, development and identification of instruments, pilot testing, begin data collection.
2.	January 90 February 90 March 90 April 90	2. Complete data collection, begin final report.
3.	May 90 June 90 July 90 August 90 September 90	3. Complete final reports, consult with program staff as needed.

B. Research Questions

The major objectives of this study are stated in Section IA, Purposes of the Project. To meet these objectives a number of specific research questions were formulated. These questions were grouped around the following categories: demographics, reading proficiency, life role applications and relationships, affective outcomes and program related questions.

1. Demographic Characteristics

- a. What is gender characteristics of the sample in this study?
- b. What are the age characteristics of the sample in this study?
- c. What percentage of the sample in this study was raised in homes in which the first language was other than English?

2. Reading Proficiency

- a. What is the reading grade level equivalency (GLE) of the participants at entry into the program?
- b. What are the gains in GLE during participation in the program?
- c. What is the average gain in GLE per month during participation?
- d. What is the relationship between entry level GLE and GLE gain per month during participation?
- e. What is the relationship between age at entry and GLE gain per month during participation?
- f. What is the relationship between high school completion and entry level GLE?

- g. What is the relationship between high school completion and GLE gain per month during participation?
- h. What is the relationship between length of time of participation in months and GLE gain per month?
- i. What reading strategies do participants report they employ?

3. Life Role Relationships

- a. What are the employment patterns of the participants?
- b. What techniques to cope with and/or conceal their limited reading proficiency do participants report?
- c. What is the nature and frequency of participants' application of improved reading proficiency to life roles?

4. Affective Outcomes

- a. What affective outcomes do participants report as the result of the tutoring program?

5. Program Related Outcomes

- a. How did participants find out about the Macomb Reading Partners Program?
- b. What events or conditions caused the participants to enroll in Macomb Reading Partners?
- c. What are other findings which can be derived from the data in this study?

C. Development of Data Collection Procedures

Three sources of data were used to respond to the research questions for this study. A structured interview following a pre-determined protocol with each of participants in the sample was used to collect reported attitudes, skill applications, social aspects and demographic characteristics. The Word Opposites Test of the Botel Reading Inventory (1962) was used in a test-retest situation as a measure of reading proficiency and gains in reading proficiency over time. The program staff maintains a record file for every participant in the program, and these files were consulted for each participants in the sample.

1. Structured Interview

A protocol to guide these interviews was developed to assure that the important information for each participant was collected. Selected literature from the fields of adult education and adult literacy was consulted in designing the interview protocol. Specifically, the work of Aslanian and Brickell (1980) was useful in developing questions regarding motivation for participation. The research of Darkenwald and Valentine (1985) and that of Hayes and Valentine (1989) helped in developing questions about participant outcomes from participation in the tutoring program and applications of literacy skills to life role situations. More generally, Diekhoff's (1988) article on adult literacy programs and Hayes and Snow's (1989) thoughts on the ends and means of adult literacy education were useful in the overall structuring of the interview protocol. A copy of this protocol is Appendix A.

Four pilot interviews were conducted with program participants. All of the subjects for the pilot interviews had been in the program for a minimum of one year, and had expressed an interest and willingness to assist the program staff in maintaining the program. Three of the four were extremely verbal and their interviews were lengthy. It was difficult to follow the protocol because they had so much they wanted to tell the interviewer. The last pilot interview was

different from the first three in that the participant was very non-verbal in the interview. The protocol was easily completed, but with short, terse answers. When the results of the four pilot interviews were compared the striking difference was in the richness and depth of the information collected when the participants had their own stories to tell as opposed to the interviews in which the participant gave only short responses to questions. Based upon these pilot interviews the protocol was revised slightly and it was decided to encourage the participants in the research sample to talk about any topic they chose at some point in the interview.

2. Word Opposites Test of the Botel Reading Inventory

Since all of the participants in the Macomb Reading Partners program are routinely administered this test upon entry and at six months intervals, it was decided to use this instrument as a measure of reading proficiency.

The Word Opposites Test is designed to give an estimate of word comprehension at levels first reader through senior high school (Aaron, 1965). Raw scores can be converted to grade level equivalencies, according to percentages of correct matches of item words and their opposites. Independent, instructional and frustration grade levels can be determined. For this study, the independent level was used because independent or free reading is the desired outcome. However, reporting the independent levels reflects lower grade level equivalencies than if either the instructional or frustration levels were reported. Unfortunately, the Botel Reading Inventory includes no information on test validity or reliability. However, Aaron believes that the actual experiences of teachers and reading specialists support the standards set forth for the test (Aaron, 1965). The strength of the Word Opposites Test lies in its ease of administration. It can be given quickly and requires only

a single form which includes both the test items and response spaces. Scoring can be done rapidly. For this study, the primary reason for using the results of the Word Opposites Test was the availability of test-retest results over the time of participation in the tutoring program.

3. Program Participant Files

These files contain demographic information about each participant as well as a history of his or her tutoring experience. The Word Opposites Test results are recorded in the file along with any other measures of reading achievement which might have been taken. For example, some of the participants have been administered the Slosson Oral Reading Inventory.

The files of the participants in the research sample were read carefully as a means of seeking validation for information gained through the interviews. Each participant's file was read immediately prior to the interview, and in some instances, the procedure suggested areas of concern to be probed in the interview.

D. Research Sample

With the lengthy interview procedure developed for data collection, a relatively small sample was selected for this study. It was felt that a sample of thirty participants would be large enough to permit comparison of sub groups on various social, demographic, and reading proficiency categories. A series of criteria were applied in selecting the sample of 30.

1. Length of Time in the Program.

Only those participants who had been in the program for more than six months were considered. There were two reasons for setting this as the first criterion. It was felt that the impact of tutoring could be reflected in the test-retest administration of the Botel Word Opposites Test and the interviews; and the participants are routinely administered this test at six month intervals.

2. Exceptional Adults

Some of the program participants were excluded from the sample for this study. When it was known that any of the following pertained to a participant, that participant was not contacted for participation.

- a. Those who are non-English speaking,
- b. Those who are mentally and/or emotionally impaired,
- c. Those with severe auditory and/or visual impairments,
and
- d. Those with neurological disorders.

Since those with any of these characteristics are treated in a different manner from others in the program, often including referrals to other agencies, they were not representative of the total population of adult participants in Macomb Reading Partners.

3. Availability and Willingness to Participate

From the list of program participants who remained after the first two criteria were applied, participants were selected randomly. They were contacted by phone and asked to participate. This procedure was continued until 32 agreed.

At the end of the interviews with the 14th participants and the 26th participant it was determined that these two adults had one of the conditions described in Section 2 above. They were not included in the sample, which left the sample size at 30.

E. Data Gathering

Following the series of criteria described in Section II D, Research Sample, program participants were contacted first by a person who was a well-known participant in the program. He had been in tutoring for some time and was one of the pilot interviewees. He explained the purpose of the study, what a participants would be asked to do if he or she agreed to participate, and sought the participants's consent to participate. If the participant agreed, an interview was scheduled to be held at the Macomb Reading Partners Offices at the Macomb County Library.

The program staff did a number of things to make the participants feel welcome and at ease when they arrived for interviews. Coffee and rolls were always provided. When possible, participants were met by the Program Director, and if time permitted a short chat would follow. The Director or some one from the program staff introduced the interviewer to the participant.

Interviews were conducted in a private place, either an office or a conference room. Since the researcher had considerable experience as a interviewer and could take extensive notes while interviewing, the interviews were not taped. It was felt the participants might be more relaxed and speak more frankly in the absence of the tape recorder.

1. Informed Consent

Informed consent means that the person consents to participate in the study only after he or she understands the purpose of the study, the benefits of the study in general and to the individual participant, the personal risks involved (if any), what will be expected of the participant, what uses will be made of the findings, that the participant's real name will not be used in any report or reference to the study and will be kept confidential, that the participant can choose not to answer any question or questions, and that the participant can withdraw from the study at any time with no prejudice or recriminations.

With a sample of adults with low reading ability informed consent must be handled carefully. A consent letter was prepared for the participants (See Appendix B). This letter was carefully written in as low of a readability level as possible and yet include all of the concerns listed above. Before the interview protocol was begun, this letter was given to each participant by the interviewer. In most instances, the participant read the letter aloud, and in a few instances the interviewer read the letter to the participant. In every instance, the meaning of each paragraph was discussed in an attempt to assure that the participant understood what he or she was consenting to. A signed consent letter for every participant is under lock in the researcher's files.

2. Interviews

The interviews averaged slightly over one hour for each. The participants were generally very friendly and only two appeared cautious. Most expressed a willingness to assist the Macomb Reading Partners. With only two exceptions, it was possible to follow the protocol and complete it. These were the two participants referred to earlier as being eliminated from the sample.

F. Data Analysis

Data collected for this study were both qualitative and quantitative in nature. Those data which were expressed quantitatively were reported and analyzed in terms of frequency counts, measures of central tendency and other descriptive comparisons. Qualitative data were formed into vignettes of individual participants, descriptions of processes and expressions of preferences, attitudes or perceptions. Where needed, descriptions of specific analysis procedures are included in Section III, Findings.

III. Findings

The findings of this study are presented in this section, and are arranged to respond to the specific research questions set forth in Section II B.

A. Demographic Characteristics

Table 3 displays the pseudonyms of the persons in the sample, their ages when they entered the program, those who were raised in homes whose first language were other than English, and their educational levels completed.

When these results are compared to the characteristics of the 1989-1990 participant groups combined it appears the research sample was quite representative of the population on some characteristics and less representative on others.

1. Gender - The sample was approximately 73% male while the total population of participants was 58% male.
2. Age - The mean age of the sample was 38 years while the mean age of all program participants was between 30 to 39 years.
3. Educational Status - The research sample had very similar school educational attainment as did the total population in the program, except that the last grade completed for the sample showed less dispersion from the mean than did the total group.

Table 3

Macomb Literacy Partners Research Project
Pseudonyms of Participants and Selected Demographic Characteristics

Student Number	Program n=30	Age At Program Entry	First Language Other Than English	Last Grade Completed
1.	Anderson, Lawrence	28		9
2.	Andress, Milton	39		9
3.	Biddle, Howard	47		9
4.	Bonn, Perry	29		12
5.	Brown, Marie	39		12
6.	Cory, William	37		9
7.	Corona, John	45		12
8.	Dickerson, Mathew	27		12
9.	Elmore, Fred	46		9
10.	Farmer, Diane	25		12
11.	Foldini, Camillo	26	X	9
12.	Gallini, Terrance	30		8
13.	George, Mary	47		9
14.	Herr, James	30	X	12
15.	Jones, Carrie	27		12
16.	Knight, Andrew	46		12
17.	LaFaye, John	44		8
18.	Lewis, BettyLou	29		12
19.	Manci, Raymond	23	X	12
20.	Ming, James	50	X	12
21.	Monti, Gabriella	35	X	12
22.	O'Brien, Dean	32		9
23.	Orlandi, Paul	58		9
24.	Pratter, Beverly	45		8
25.	Prentiss, Brian	48		8
26.	Riddle, Gerald	22		12
27.	Roman, Louis	42	X	7
28.	Towne, Samuel	35		9
29.	Wahl, Norma	49		10
30.	Ward, Richard	50		9

Gender n=30

Male - 22

Female - 8

Age at Entry

Range 22-58

x - 38

Male x - 38

Female x - 37

First Language n=30

English - 24

Other than English - 6

Percentage of sample raised in
homes whose first language was
other than English - 20%

Educational Status

Last Grade Completed

6-8 17%

9-11 40%

12 43%

B. Reading Proficiency

Table 4 displays the following information for each participant in the research sample:

- Number of months in the tutoring program at the time of the interview.
- Reading grade level equivalency at the time of entry into the program.
- Reading grade level equivalency at the end of the latest six month interval.
- Total reading grade level equivalency gain from date of entry to the end of the latest six month interval.
- Mean reading grade level equivalency gain per month.
- Mean reading grade level equivalency gain per month for the entire sample.

The mean reading grade level equivalency gain per month for the sample was derived by dividing the total of all average gains by the total in the sample for this table (n=29). This figure of .204 suggests that for every month in tutoring the members of the sample gained an average of approximately .2 of a year.

Table 4

Reading Achievement Gains

Participant Sequence Number (n=30)	Months of Tutoring (1)	Entry GLE (2)	Last GLE	Total GLE Gain	Average GLE Gain Per Month
1.	9	P(0)	2	2	.222
2.	21	3	6	3	.143
3.	9	2	5	2	.222
4.	30	3	8	5	.167
5.	16	4	6	2	.125
6.	14	1	4	3	.214
7.	6	3	4	1	.167
8.	9	P(0)	2	2	.222
9.	15	2	4	2	.133
10.	6	3	4	1	.167
11.	13	2	3	1	.077
12.	10	2	3	1	.100
13.	5(3)	1	5	4	.800
14.	No Measures				
15.	6	2	4	2	.333
16.	22	5	8	3	.136
17.	21	3	5	2	.095
18.	17	4	6	2	.118
19.	8	3	4	1	.125
20.	10	5	8	3	.300
21.	35	3	6	3	.086
22.	8	2	5	3	.375
23.	15	1	3	2	.133
24.	8	2	4	2	.250
25.	10	3	5	2	.200
26.	13	3	4	1	.077
27.	5(3)	5	8	3	.600
28.	8	3	4	1	.125
29.	8	5	6	1	.125
30.	22	3	5	2	.091

Total = 5.928

n = 29

Average Mean Gain
Per Month

.204

(1) Represents the number of months between the beginning of tutoring and the month of the most recent Botel Word Opposites Test result.

(2) GLE - Grade Level Equivalency on the Word Opposites Test

(3) Sample participants 13 and 27 met the criterion of 6 months in the program but each missed one month of tutoring during that period.

Table 5 shows the average gains in grade level equivalency per month arranged by the participants' grade level equivalency at entry into the tutoring program. Mean gains are calculated by grade level at entry. With two exceptions these results show that the lower the grade level equivalency of an adult at entry the greater the gain per month of tutoring can be expected. On a cautionary note, it should be pointed out that the sample size at some grade levels is very small.

Table 5

Reading Achievement Gain Per Month by
Reading Grade Level Equivalency at Entry

Participant Sequence Number (n-29)	GLE at Entry	GLE Gain Per Month	
1.	P(0)	.222	x gain p = .222
8.	P(0)	.222	
6.	1	.214	x gain 1 = .382
13.	1	.800	
23.	1	.133	
3.	2	.222	x gain 2 = .213
9.	2	.133	
11.	2	.077	
12.	2	.100	
15.	2	.333	
22.	2	.375	
24.	2	.250	
7.	3	.167	x gain 3 = .135
17.	3	.095	
19.	3	.125	
25.	3	.200	
26.	3	.077	
28.	3	.125	
2.	3	.143	
4.	3	.167	
10.	3	.167	
21.	3	.086	
5.	4	.125	x gain 4 = .111
18.	4	.118	
30.	4	.091	
16.	5	.136	x gain 5 = .290
20.	5	.300	
27.	5	.600	
29.	5	.125	
x gain P - 3 = .201			
x gain 4 - 5 = .214			
x gain P - 1 = .318			
x gain 2 - 3 = .167			
x gain 4 - 5 = .214			

Table 6 shows data organized around mean gain in grade level equivalency per month by participants' age at entry into tutoring. While there is no clear progression of mean monthly gains related to participant age at entry, it does appear that the older students (ages 40-58) do achieve higher monthly gains than do the younger participants. The 40-49 age group clearly showed the greatest average monthly gains.

Table 6
Average Mean Grade Level Equivalency Gain Per Month By
Participant Age at Entry

<u>Age</u>	<u>n-29</u> <u>n</u>	<u>x Gain Per Month</u>
28-29	9	.168
30-39	7	.167
40-49	10	.273
50-58	3	.175
22-39	16	.167
40-58	13	.250

Table 7 shows last school grade completed, grade level equivalency at entry into the program, and average grade level equivalency gain per month. It may be of interest to note that, for this sample, there appears to be no positive relationship between last school grade completed and either the participants' grade level equivalencies at entry or their mean monthly gains in grade level equivalencies.

Table 7

Entry Grade Level Equivalency, Average Monthly Gains in Grade
Level Equivalency and Last School Grade Completed

Student Sequence Number(n=30)	Last School Grade Completed	GLE at Entry	Mean GLE Gain Per Month
27.	7	5	.600
12.	8	2	.100
17.	8	3	.095
24.	8	2	.250
25.	8	3	.200
1.	9	0	.222
2.	9	3	.143
3.	9	2	.222
6.	9	1	.214
9.	9	2	.133
11.	9	2	.077
13.	9	1	.800
22.	9	2	.375
23.	9	1	.133
28.	9	3	.125
30.	9	4	.091
29.	10	5	.125
4.	12	3	.167
5.	12	4	.125
7.	12	3	.167
8.	12	0	.222
10.	12	3	.167
14.	12	No Measures	
15.	12	2	.333
16.	12	5	.136
18.	12	4	.118
19.	12	3	.125
20.	12	5	.300
21.	12	3	.086
26	12	3	.077

Table 7 Summary

Last Grade Completed	Mean GLE At Entry	Mean GLE Gain Per Month
7 (n=1)	5	.600
8 (n=4)	2.5	.161
9 (n=11)	1.91	.230
10 (n=1)	5	.125
12 (n=12)	3.1	.166

Table 8 reflects a comparison of average monthly gain in grade level equivalency to number of months of tutoring. While the progression is not entirely linear, it is clear that, for this sample, the greatest gains in grade level equivalency come in the first year in tutoring.

Table 8

Average Grade Level Equivalency Gain Per Month by Months in Tutoring

Participant Sequence Number (n=29)	Months in Tutoring	Average GLE Gain Per Month	Mean Gains by Months of Tutoring
13.	5	.800	
27.	5	.600	5 - .700
7.	6	.167	
10.	6	.167	
15.	6	.333	6 - .222
19.	8	.125	
22.	8	.375	
24.	8	.250	
28.	8	.125	
29.	8	.125	8 - .200
1.	9	.222	
3.	9	.222	
8.	9	.222	9 - .222
12.	10	.100	
20.	10	.300	
25.	10	.200	10 - .200
11.	13	.077	
26.	13	.077	13 - .077
6.	14	.214	14 - .214
9.	15	.133	
23.	15	.133	15 - .133
5.	16	.125	16 - .125
18.	17	.118	17 - .130
2.	21	.143	
17.	21	.095	21 - .107
16.	22	.136	
30.	22	.091	22 - .113
4.	30	.167	30 - .167
21.	35	.086	35 - .086

Table 8 Summary

<u>Months in Tutoring</u>	<u>Mean Monthly Gain</u>
5-10 (n=16)	.271
13-35 (n=13)	.123

While the purposes of this research did not include an examination of the strategies employed by the participants while reading, some of the participants did discuss their thoughts about reading. These disclosures may be of interest and are reported in summary form here.

Of the thirty participants in the sample, fourteen used the term "dyslexia" or some form of that term once or more during the interview. This is significant only when the low literate uses the term and/or associated condition as an excuse for his or her low literacy level, which someone else is needed to correct. This is some what analogous to going to the physician for a cure to an illness.

Sixteen of the participants made unsolicited comments about how they view reading. All of these participants had grade level equivalencies of 4th or higher. Twelve of the sixteen who made comments made remarks which suggested a meaning based conception of reading. Excerpts from these comments follow:

- "I do better with words in sentences. I'm not too good with flash cards."
- "If you are reading a story you can usually figure out what the word is."
- "I work on trying to understand what I read."
- "I'm learning to comprehend."
- "The faster I read the less I'm distracted."
- "I get the words I don't know by looking at the other words."
- "Sometimes I put an extra word in sentences when I read."
- "Words in sentences are easier than words on cards."
- "Sometimes I skip a word if I don't know it, then come back to it."
- "I like reading about things I already know about. It's easier."
- "I just need to find more time to practice so I can get better."

The four remarks which signified a print based conception of reading were as follows:

- "I look for little words in longer words. Sometimes that helps."
- "I have trouble hearing the sounds."
- "I'm getting better at sounding out words."
- "I know phonics would help (me read), but I don't know them."

Among many other participants' comments about reading, four are cited here to reflect the frustrations of the low literate adult.

- "I don't like the work illiterate."
- "I can do anything. I just can't read."
- "They wouldn't let me re-enlist (Army) because I couldn't read."
- "When my daughter's teacher says to me, 'she is a sight word reader.' That teacher is talking about me."

C. Life Role Relationships

1. Employment Patterns

Interview notes and program participants' files were used to compile this composite of the employment patterns of the participants in the sample. As Macomb County and the surrounding area are heavily involved in the automobile industry, the three major domestic auto manufactures play an important role in the work of these participants. Eight of the participants are employed by Chrysler, two by General Motors, and two by Ford Motors. Of these twelve, six work on the assembly line, one works in maintenance, while the others perform skilled trades such as pipefitter, mill wright, and weigh master. Four others work for companies whose major business is as suppliers of machinery to the auto makers. The following list of occupations reflects the work of some of the other participants.

- Boiler operator in a large hospital
- Electrician for an electrical contractor
- House keeper in a hospital
- Printing press assembler
- Operates a truck vending route
- Auto body shop worker (2)
- Welder in the oil industry
- Houseware salesperson
- Carpenter for a department store
- Manager for a food caterer

One participant owns and operates an auto body shop with his brother, and three have chosen to be home makers for their families. However, the three home makers all held jobs outside their homes before they left the work force. Four of the participants report that they have medical disabilities which either prevents them from working, or has caused them to seek jobs which are less physically demanding.

Very few of the participants have held jobs with only one or two companies during their work lives. Most have held a series of jobs with various companies, though many have stayed in the same general type of work for long periods. Most of the work done by the participants involved moderate to heavy physical labor, but some hold positions with major responsibilities. Apparently, the low literacy skills of the participants often does not extend to numeracy. A fair number of the jobs reported appear to involve reading numbers on charts, gauges, memos and computers, and often calculations are required to do the work.

One finding which the researcher finds surprising has to do with the high percentage of participants who report holding second jobs. The following were all reported as second income jobs by the participants.

- Block layer
- Heavy equipment operator
- Photographer
- Potterer
- Auto racing
- Coin dealer
- Short order cook
- Houseware dealer
- Carpentry
- Caterer (has own part time business)
- Painter at a marina
- Bartender
- Butcher

There are at least two reasonable explanations for the participants in this study to seek second incomes. First, the level of job security in the auto industry and other industry has not been high. During periods of lay-off other sources of incomes are sought. Second, the regular jobs held by some of the participants are not high income. A second income may be seen as desirable if not necessary. In any case, the popular belief that the low literate are lazy is not supported by this finding.

2. Coping and Concealing Strategies

Adults with low literacy skills often develop techniques to both cope with this problem and also to conceal their lack of proficiency from others. Some of these strategies are very adaptive in that they assist the low literate to cope in a literate society. Others are non-adaptive or maladaptive in that they simply perpetuate the problems and continue feelings of low self worth. On the surface it is sometimes difficult to determine whether a strategy is adaptive, non-adaptive or maladaptive, but an attempt has been made here to characterize the strategies reported as either coping (adaptive) or concealing (non-adaptive or maladaptive).

Concealing Strategies

- "I didn't take an office in my church because you have to know how to write to do the job."
- "I did everything I could think of to keep the guys at work from knowing I was a poor reader. I'd say, 'My eyes hurt or I forgot my glasses' or I'd let some one else pick up the work order."
- "I told my girl friend I couldn't read very well, but I didn't let her know how bad it was."
- "I have to be careful when we (spouse) get together with friends. There are some games I can't read well enough to play. When we play Trivial Pursuit I get my partner to read the questions."
- "I think my kids know (I can't read). I have them read to me rather than me read to them."
- "I decided not to go for another chair in the Masons (lodge) because of my reading."
- "Sometimes I buy a paper. I try to find something in it I can read, but mostly I just carry it around."
- "I dated my wife for four years before I told her. She didn't know I had a reading problem."

Coping Strategies

- "I've learned to read the contract (union). They don't take advantage of me."
- "When I was a job setter, I kept a list of words I needed in my work box."
- "I have a list of words at my work station. I've drawn a little picture by some of them to remind me."
- "I have a little paper I take with me to copy from when I fill out job applications."
- "I learned to tend bar all by memory. I think I always knew how to make change."
- "I have a little crib sheet in my wallet I use when I report my production."
- "My brother was a foreman at the plant. He brought home an application form, and mother helped me fill it out."
- "I've learned to spell numbers so I can write checks."
- "I'm afraid to pay bills by mail, afraid I'll make a mistake. So I deliver them or pay them at the credit union."
- "I use a calendar to multiply by seven. I keep a calculator right by my computer at work. I have memorized the screen I use, all I do is fill in the numbers."
- "At work my partner and I pick up a job sheet (auto plant maintenance). I try to get it first and find one job I can read (on the sheet). I say, "let's do this first." then hand him the list and he reads from then on."
- "I hire people to read from me (he owns his small business), but I never let them know I can't do it (read)."
- "When I had to appear before the judge (parental guardianship), I memorized what I wanted to say and practiced it over and over."

- "I think my memory is better than most people! I can't read the map, but I can remember long directions."
- "At shift change (in a auto plant), they leave a list of machine numbers and a description of their problems in the logbook. I just look to the numbers, go to the machines, figure out what is wrong for myself, and fix them."
- "When I was a room mother, I always found ways to do the jobs. When I checked spelling word tests, I had a list to go by."
- "I learned to write checks. Sometimes I have to look at the store name or name on the bill to spell it right. I'm not embarrassed to ask how to spell a name."
- "I kept it (low reading) from my boy friend until we were married. Then I let him know a little at a time. He was disappointed at first, but now I'm in the program (tutoring) and he says he is proud of me and trys to find ways to help me. We do some things together, which helps. We pay bills together and that helps me learn to read."

3. Acquisition and Application of Literacy Skills

The interview procedures developed by Darkenwald and Valentine (1985) in their study of basic skills education outcomes were modified for use in this study.

During the interview each participant was asked, "Has this program helped you become a better reader?" Using different language, all 30 respondents answered in the affirmative.

The participants were then asked, "Since you started this program, have you used your reading skills to do something you couldn't do before, or to do it better?" Again, all thirty participants indicated they did make use of their improved reading proficiency in their life roles.

The results in this study for these two questions were higher than the results reported by Darkenwald and Valentine (1985). This may be due to the tutors in the program emphasizing application of skills and the use of life role materials and tasks in their tutoring. Some examples of this type of tutoring follow as quotations from the interviews.

---- "My tutor and I baked cookies last week"

---- "We (tutor and adult student) go out to eat once in while. She helps me with the menu."

---- "When we (tutor and adult student) go shopping she helps me know what to look for on the labels (clothing)."

---- "She (tutor) helped me pick out some books to read to my girls."

---- "My tutor knew I wanted to open a savings account. She showed me how."

Table 9 shows the frequency of free responses made per participant. Again, the 3.4 mean responses per participants in this study is higher than the 2.2 mean responses recorded by Darkenwald and Valentine. This difference may due to the nature of the face to face interview in this study compared to the telephone interview in the previous study. Also, these application questions were raised near the close of the interview, after a discussion of literacy and the participant's relationship to literacy. This may have created a good set for the respondent to answer these application questions.

Table 10 displays the specific applications reported by the participants and their frequencies. They are arbitrarily arranged by life roles. The participants reported applying their new literacy skills to the various life roles. The number who reported occupational applications is more significant than the table suggests because some of the respondents were not employed since beginning the tutoring program.

Table 9

Frequency of Responses Made Regarding Application of Reading Skills

<u>Number of Responses</u>	<u>Number of Respondents</u>
8	1
7	1
6	0
5	5
4	7
3	6
2	7
1	2
	30

Total Responses 103

Mean Number of Responses Per Participant 3.4

Table 10

Application of Reading Skills to Life Roles

<u>Application</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Application</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
<u>Consumer</u>		<u>Family Life</u>	
Menu	15	Mail	14
Newspaper ad	6	Read to children	5
Shopping Coupons	5	Recipes	2
Medicine label	2	Phone book	1
Charge card bill	2	Play games with family	1
Write a shopping list	2		23
Pay bills by mail	2		
Plane schedule	1	<u>Personal</u>	
Airport signs	1	Bible	6
Checking account	1	Magazines	4
Savings Account	1	Newspaper sports	3
	38	Write letter	2
		Books	2
<u>Occupation</u>		Church lesson	1
Complete job application	3	Driver's license test	1
Job manual	2	Thermometer	1
Job memo	2	Newspaper comics	1
Write job order	1	Maps	1
Work order	1	Prepared a speech	1
Bulletin board	1	Arranged a schedule	1
	10	Kept a calendar	1
		Street signs	1
			26
<u>Community</u>			
Ballot/Vote	6		
	6		

Finally, participants were asked, "What are some of the things you have done or can now do with your reading skills?" This was followed immediately by the standard probe: "such as read recipes, want ads, your mail, magazines, memos at work and other things like that." No further examples were provided by the interviewer to allow for as much opportunity for free response as possible, and to reduce the influence of interview suggestions.

D. Affective Outcomes

As with the application to life skills outcomes, the procedures used by Darkenwald and Valentine (1985) were modified to explore the affective outcomes of the program. Participants were asked, "Do you feel better about yourself, the same, or worse as a result of being in this tutoring program?" Of the 30 respondents, 29 (97%) reported feeling better about themselves while one reported feeling about the same. These results are slightly better than in the Darkenwald and Valentine study in which approximately 92% reported feeling better.

The 29 participants who reported feeling better about themselves were asked to specify "why or in what ways do you feel better about yourself?" The total number of reasons given per participant ranged from five to one, with the mean number of reasons reported being 2.7.

Table 11 reports a summary of the reasons reported by the participants for feeling better about themselves as a result of the tutoring program. The responses were inductively coded into six major categories of reasons. Responses which made specific reference to reading and/or writing improvement were grouped into "Improved Literacy." Responses which reflected an attitude or feeling toward one's self were coded "Enhanced Self Confidence/Self Esteem." Responses which referred to a sense of accomplishment were grouped and termed "Personal Accomplishment." Participants' comments related to either better employment opportunities or to improved work performance were coded "Enhanced Job Opportunities/Performance." The "Enhanced Interpersonal Skills" grouping included reports of being more likely to talk to others, relationships with family and friends and other examples. Those reasons given which stated or

implied a rise in educational aspirations such as high school completion, GED testing, skill training and others were coded "Enhanced Educational Opportunity."

Table 11
Reasons Reported for Feeling Better About Self
as a Result of the Tutoring Program

<u>Reason</u>	<u>Number of Participants Reporting</u>	<u>Weighted Score</u>
Improved Literacy	25	142
Enhanced Self Confidence/Self Esteem	15	82
Personal Accomplishment	14	50
Enhanced Job Opportunity/ Performance	11	45
Enhanced Interpersonal Skills	10	42
Enhanced Educational Opportunity	7	32

Weighted scores in Table 11 were derived by the following procedure. After each participant had named all of the reasons for feeling better because of participation in the program, the reasons given were repeated by the interviewer. The participant was then asked, "Which of these do you feel is the most important reason why you feel better about yourself?" "Which is second in importance?" This process continued until all of the reasons given were

ranked. After the rankings for each participant were tabulated a weighting was assigned according to the following schedule.

Ranking	Weighting
1	6
2	5
3	4
4	3
5	2

Weighted scores were calculated and entered into Table 11. These scores suggest that the participants thought first in terms of improved literacy. Both the number of participants who reported this reason (25) and the large weighted score (142) suggested this new proficiency was very highly valued. Enhanced self concept or self esteem attitudes were also a very highly significant factor in the participants affective domain.

E. Program Related Outcomes

The interview protocol included a number of topics related to programmatic questions. These outcomes are addressed in this section.

1. Sources of Knowledge of the Program.

Table 12 displays the sources of information participants reported as their means of knowledge of the program.

Table 12

Participant's Reported Sources of Knowledge of the
Macomb Literacy Partners Program

<u>Source</u>	<u>Number of Participants Reporting (n=30)</u>
Television-Public Service or News Coverage	11
Relative or Friend	6
Adult Education-Teacher Administrator, Counselor or Student	5
Library	5
Work Site-Supervisors, Co-Worker, Bulletin Board	1
Professional Referral-Physician, Counselor, Social Worker	1
Newspaper	1

2. Personal Life Conditions and Events

Aslanian and Brickell work supports the view that adults seek learning experiences when they are involved in life transitions, and that there are usually specific events which mark these transitions. The participants in this study were asked to talk about changes in their lives which caused them to seek tutorial assistance through this program. Twenty nine of the 30 participants in this study were able to offer specific reasons why they decided to enter the Macomb Literacy Partners program. Many talked in terms of Aslanian and Brickell's concepts of transitions and triggering events, while others used other descriptions of their motivation.

Economic or Employment Factors

Twelve of the participants assigned an employment or economic motive for entering the tutoring program.

- Took a training course for a boiler operator's license but failed because of inadequate reading proficiency.
- Was not permitted to re-enlist in the U.S. Army because of inadequate reading proficiency.
- Applied for but was denied a housewares dealership because of low literacy.
- Tired of house keeping work at a hospital, wants to be an LPN, needs better reading to enroll in program.
- Supervisor at work recommended a reading program, or promotions would be withheld.
- Manufacturing plant is installing computers.
- Company would send an employee to drafting school but a 10th GLE is required for entry. Participants's current GLE is 8th.
- New job (promotion) requires better reading.

- Wants to open small retail business (coin shop) but reading proficiency is too low.
- A promotion from plant maintenance to the office increases reading demands.
- Sent to an out-of-city school for two weeks, which was expected to lead to promotion to foreman, couldn't read the class materials, couldn't take notes fast enough.
- Wants to open small, part time business in a field already familiar, afraid low reading proficiency would interfere.

Family Related Factors

Eight participants cited factors which were family related.

- Wife kept after her husband to enroll.
- Strong desire to help nine year old son with homework.
- Young man's sister volunteered to be his tutor if he enrolled.
- Young man wanted to tell his finance he was a poor reader and thought she might be more accepting if he were enrolled in a program.
- Woman doesn't want her four year old son to know she has a reading problem.
- Young woman was determined her children would not be illiterate, when they reached the secondary school level and were doing well she said to herself, "Well, why not me?"
- A 45 year old man had six children - ages 12-25 years, they kept after him until he enrolled.
- A 36 year old woman believes that her two children are at age when she can do something for herself.

Health Related Factors

Five respondents described their medical problems and/or disabilities. All five indicated they wanted to improve their reading levels to a point at which they could hold jobs which were less physically demanding.

Mandated Participation

Two of the respondents indicated that they were enrolled in the tutoring program as a condition of participation in the social services system.

Other Factors

Two of the participants described their reason for entering the tutoring program as simply the last in a series of attempts to get help with their reading problems. One had tried ABE, a private diagnostic clinic, physicians, a university clinic and a private tutor, none of which seemed to have helped very much. The other had been paying \$40.00 per hour for private tutoring and found that too expensive and not very helpful.

3. Participant/Tutor Relationships

While the nature of the tutoring program was not a central focus of this study, and the sample participants were not asked about the program in the interview, one aspect of the program was discussed in many of the interviews. Many of the participants wanted to discuss their relationships with their tutors. In the description of the tutors and their relationships the terms that appear with great frequency included, "friend, available, loving, caring, there for me, companion, helpful" and others. There appear to be two important points to be made from this finding. First, the participants are generally very positive about their tutors, which of course is highly desirable. Second, this tutor --participant relationship may be the most important factor in the success of a volunteer literacy program.

IV. Discussion

This section represents the researcher's observation regarding the findings reported in the preceding section.

A. Vignettes

These are a number of short "stories" about selected participants in the sample. They may serve to provide the reader with some sense of the respondents in this study as persons.

Camillo

Camillo Foldini decided to seek help in learning to read when he selected what he thought was an appropriate card for his sister's 38th birthday. About a week after her birthday, she told him he had given her a sympathy card. Camillo's sister used this misadventure for an opportunity to once again encourage him to seek assistance through Macomb Reading Partners. She even volunteered to tutor Camillo, on the condition that he contact the Literacy Center.

Camillo's life has included a number of successes along with one chronic frustration. That frustration, of course, is that up until recently he was a very poor reader. Camillo expresses his frustrations in his own unique way with statements such as the following:

"I couldn't keep up in grade school. They sent me to special classes from first grade on."

"I'll never be able to own my own shop (auto body repair) until I learn to write estimates."

"I have a kid in fifth grade. If I could read as well as he does, I'd be ok."

"There are some games (party games) I can't play because you have to read. When we are with our friends, I have to be careful about what I get into."

"I think my biggest fear is to go into a store and have to write a check."

"I just don't even try to read books."

These expressions of frustration and anxiety are not unusual for an adult who is not very good reader.

Camillo has managed some successes in his life. After dropping out of junior high school in 1967, he enrolled in a trade school and completed a three month auto body repair program. He then went to work for a small auto body repair business, and has worked in auto body repair ever since his first job. He has thought of going to work for one of the big three auto manufacturers, but believes he would have to give up too many of the positive aspects of working for a small firm.

About one year after entering the Macomb Reading Partners tutoring program, and working on a two hour per day, one day per week schedule with his volunteer tutor, Camillo was offered the opportunity to become a partner in the body shop where he was employed. The two partners in the shop respected Camillo, liked his work and felt he would make a good partner. Although Camillo had the money to enter the partnership, he decided not to. He stated, "I had learned a little about reading and how to read in the year I worked with Lucy James (the tutor). I knew I didn't read well enough to go into the business. Actually Camillo has raised his reading grade level equivalency during that period of working with his tutor from a low second grade level to a good solid third grade level. Should Camillo have entered the partnership. It's difficult to know, but Camillo credits his tutoring with helping him realize he wasn't ready for such a move.

Camillo is very positive about his relationship with Macomb Reading Partners. In an interview with this writer, one of the first things he said was, "I want you to know right off, that this program has really helped me. I feel like I'm doing some things to help myself, and I'm just a little better person." When asked in what ways he was a better person he responded, "Well, I'm more apt to ask the boss for help when I can't read something. He's been helping me write estimates, which is what you have to do if you want to advance."

And finally, a statement by Camillo that reflects both his frustration and his determination. "You can't learn stuff if you don't read. You need to know how (to read) to get by. It's all written down, and I'm learning how to read it."

Jim

Thirty-two year old Jim Herr was born in the north eastern United States of immigrant parents. The family moved to the Detroit area when Jim was seven. After a relatively uneventful but mediocre school career he dropped out of a suburban high school at age 16. Shortly after, he entered an adult secondary education program, and was able to graduate at the same time as his high school class. Jim speaks very highly of the director of that program, and feels this director is one of the important people in his life; a person who encouraged and brought out the good in him. Jim is now married, and has two children.

After graduation Jim drifted from one low paying, part-time job to another. He indicates that he became involved with the "wrong crowd" and started using drugs. As he looks back, he feels that at that time his life was pointless and he was headed in the wrong direction. Another important person entered his life at this point. A volunteer worker at a local social agency began to meet with Jim on a weekly basis, and at one point actually took him to a Chrysler Motors plant and helped him complete the job application. He was hired, and with the exception of lay off periods, has worked for Chrysler ever since.

About the same time as his initial employment with Chrysler, Jim was married. For the last seven years his wife has been a stabilizing influence in his life.

Jim's life is full. Given his low reading ability, which is currently at about third grade level equivalency, he has accomplished a great deal. He is a concerned parent who is involved in his children's home and school lives. The family does many things together including Saturday morning breakfasts in local restaurants, playing board games together, and the Youth Bowling League. Jim and his wife both help the children with their home work, though Jim's help is

probably more of a psychological support nature, as opposed to providing advice on academic matters.

Jim has an excellent attendance record at work, and has progressed from very low-skilled jobs to his current job of driving a high-low vehicle in and around the plant. He indicates he is becoming more active in the UAW, and tries to keep them "on their toes."

In addition to his family and regular job roles, Jim is very active in other ways. He learned to make pottery about ten years ago, and still finds time to create a few pieces. He has worked occasionally for years with a friend who is a masonry contractor, and he sometimes lays brick or blocks on weekends. Jim is active in his church and is a member of a small musical group that plays for church services. He hunts every fall, and when he gets a deer, he prepares smoked venison jerky, which he sells or gives to friends. He feels he is an accomplished cook, and in addition to his personal specialities, he likes to read and try new recipes. Jim is slowly remodeling the older home in which his family lives, he maintains a vegetable garden, and he is trying to get a dozen grape vines to produce grapes for his children.

Jim has been working with a Macomb Reading Partners tutor for almost two years, though the regularity of and length of the tutoring sessions have not been as consistent as might be desired. Jim's reading has started to improve, and if he can find ways to continue to work with his tutor, he should make even greater gains. When asked what were the most important things he had gained from the literacy program, he responded, "I've met a lot of really good people and I feel better about myself knowing I'm doing something to improve."

Gabriella

Thirty-eight year old Gabriella is happily married with three teen age children. She and her husband provide a warm, stable, loving home and not only encourage but work to assure the academic achievement of their children. Gabriella is active in her childrens' school affairs and insists that they attend to their homework on a daily basis. Church and religion are also an important part of this family's life.

After a very difficult school career, which included transfers to and from private parochial elementary schools and public elementary and secondary schools, Gabriella was graduated from a public high school in the Detroit suburbs. During her school career Gabriella was grade retained twice and in one school transfer was actually set back one grade level. During this extended and difficult school experience, Gabriella never learned to read beyond approximately third grade level equivalency. Even in this difficult school career, in one conversation she related that she always made A's in Art class.

Gabriella was raised in a home in which her parents conversed mostly in Italian; they could not read or write English. She remembers her teachers telling her "you're not trying; and moving her desk from the classroom into the hallway. She felt something was wrong with her but never knew what. Her parents were demanding, but couldn't help. After she married, her husband sometimes expressed his disappointment that Gabriella couldn't read.

Gabriella's work history is a series of employment in non-skilled and low skilled jobs between the ages of 18 and 25, at which time she decided to devote all of her time to raising her children. Prior to that she was employed by and laid off by General Motors on the assembly line, by a firm that manufactured automobile gears, and by Ford as a sewing machine operator. During this period

of her life she also found time to volunteer a few hours per week in a nursing home close to her residence.

Gabriella entered the Macomb Reading Partners in October of 1986. Her reading grade level equivalency at that point was about third grade level on a standardized measure of reading. Her progress in reading has been steady. In June of 1988 her reading was at the fourth grade level equivalency, and in October, 1989 her assessment showed her grade level equivalency to be at slightly above sixth grade. She continues to work with her volunteer tutor, and she has entered an adult basic education program. She believes she is now ready for the group learning environment that the adult basic education program provides.

While the gains Gabriella has made in her reading performance are impressive and very crucial to her other successes and accomplishments, her real achievements have been in her ability to work with others and the development of her leadership capabilities. She has become a real spokesperson for the Macomb Literacy Project. She has been interviewed by local radio talk show hosts, she has met with a group of program volunteer tutors to share with them the students' perspective, she is providing leadership to the Student Advisory Committee of the Macomb Reading Partners, she traveled to Washington, D.C. with the Macomb Literacy Project Coordinator to participate in the National Issues Forum, and in January 1990 she and her husband are scheduled to go to Bangkok, Thailand in connection with the National Issues Forum.

Finally, Gabriella now sees herself in a different way. Some quotes from an interview with Gabriella reflect this change. "I'm just as good as the other guy now." "I don't have to wish, now I can do." "I want to help people." "I talk with students who are having problems. I'm the self appointed trouble shooter."

Sam

Like many of those adults who are not very good readers, Sam Towne has learned to compensate. At age 35, he is in charge of numerical control command for a firm in Detroit that manufactures custom made machinery for the automobile industry. In an interview he stated, "I'm very good at applying math to my job." In fact, Sam's job would be challenging for many highly literate adults. He routinely converts blue print information through his computer into a computer controlled metal lathe. After the lathe has produced the first part, Sam checks it with hand tools against the blue print specifications, then turns the programmed lathe over to an operator and moves on to his next task. Quite an accomplishment for a person who does not read very well.

Sam dropped out of a Detroit suburban high school at age 17. He felt he wasn't doing well enough academically to graduate, and he wanted to earn money so he could be more independent of his parents. Unlike many poor readers, Sam has a good employment history. Before dropping out of high school Sam worked summers and part time at an automobile service station. After leaving school he moved to full-time employment at the station and in about six years became the manager of the repair section at the station. At age 23, after having dated his future wife for six years, he was married. Since there were no fringe benefits and little job security at the service station, Sam decided to seek better employment. He went to work then for the company he is with today, but in a very low-skilled position. In the thirteen years with this company Sam has established a sound employment record including two promotions, and the offer of the role of foreman. He has turned down this offer twice. Why? Because he fears it will require reading skills he does not have.

Sam's life has been far from problem free. He has two young daughters, of which he is very proud. He remarked recently that his wife once said to him when he asked her to read something for him, "I don't have two children, I have three." He also remembers that he dated his future wife for about five years before revealing to her his poor reading. He was embarrassed when he had to ask for his first automobile driver's exam to be given orally. He tried adult basic education, but was quickly frustrated when he found many of the other students in the program to be unmotivated to learn. He felt they were distracting. The ABE teacher referred Sam to the Macomb Reading Partners because he expressed this frustration to her. She told him he would receive one-to-one instruction in the volunteer program.

Sam related a recent incident which reflects his frustrations with his poor reading. At a parent-teacher conference, the teacher in describing Sam's daughter's reading problems said, "Ellen is a sight word reader." then went on to describe what that meant. Sam said he thought to himself, "That teacher is talking about me."

Sam's life is full and productive. He has a stable marriage, with two children who are doing well. He is active in his church. After about nine months in the Macomb Reading Partners, his reading achievement has increased about one grade level equivalency. He has a steady, well paying job, and his hobby is the restoration of classic autos.

The functional literacy skills Sam employs in these life roles are remarkable, given his current reading grade level equivalency of about fourth grade. Three of Sam's statements offer insights into his current perspective of himself.

"There are people worse off than I am."

"Today I feel better about myself. I know I have a problem, but I'm doing something about it."

"I know I can learn to read. The only problem I might have is finding the time to work with my tutor, and to practice."

Sam's goals are clear and reasonable. He is an articulate person. He wants to learn to read, he wants to earn a high school diploma, and he wants his daughters to do well in school and in life.

Deon

Fifty seven year old Deon O'Brien has held a job ever since he was 16 years old. Gas station attendant, auto mechanic, truck driver for a lumber yard, foundry worker, auto assembly worker, journey-man millwright for Chrysler and part-time entrepreneur contractor are jobs which have contributed to this semi-literate's job security, and excellent retirement plan, a substantial amount of very conservative investments and a burning desire to learn to read. A high school diploma is also a firm and reachable goal for Deon. He is extremely verbal, words flow easily for him. His usage patterns are near standard English.

Happily married with three children, Deon appears to be a well-adjusted, happy, carefree grandfather of five. He and his wife regularly every other year visit their oldest daughter and her family in Florida. Some years they make the trip by air, and some years they drive. Deon reports that he loves to read road maps, diagrams, blueprints and other such materials. He reported that he even "figured out" a chart in the newspaper one day last week.

Deon's school experiences were similar to others of his generation. He sums it up, "Nobody helped you. They just didn't want anything to do with you if you couldn't learn. They threw me out of school, more or less, and my parents really didn't know what to do with me." He was grade retained on three occasions in elementary school, and after elementary school he was transferred to different schools three times. He attended three different junior high schools, a regular senior high school and a vocational school. When he was 15 his parents moved to a Detroit suburb. Deon moved with them, but he never enrolled in school again.

Deon is an excellent example of those adults who never mastered "school reading" but who "reads" in the "real world" context. When he entered the Macomb Reading Partners program his reading performance was assessed to be below second grade level. Yet on the job, at home and as an independent small business person he finds ways to interpret the printed symbols which are

important for him to function. He finds all sorts of ways for others to do his reading for him, he employs very clever strategies to substitute oral/aural language for reading and writing, he looks for non-letter symbols and numerals to set a "context" to help him decode words, and he has memorized those printed words which occur over and over again in this daily routines.

Deon has made excellent progress in the tutoring program. His reading performance has increased by over three grade levels to about fifth grade level in less than one year with his volunteer tutor. He has discovered one factor that some reading specialists do not understand, forget or ignore, that of the "practice effect" as a major contributor to reading improvement. He states, "You have got to do it (read) every day. Every night when I go to bed I read as long as I can stay awake. I've checked out lots of books from the library with some good stories in them. Sometimes I can't wait to see how it (the story) turns out."

When asked what he felt he had gained from the Macomb Reading Partners program, Deon replied, "It's working. I'm beginning to understand what it's all about. I'm on voluntary lay-off until next Monday. For the first time in my life I filled out my Supplemental Benefits Card by myself. I feel like I'm getting there."

Mary

"Something wonderful happens to you when you start to read." "I could not make people understand what I meant; I'm better at it now."

These quotations very realistically portray the frustrations of those who do not read well, as well as the sense of empowerment that often comes with improved reading. After eleven years of frustration, disappointment and embarrassment Mary dropped out of school at age 16. Now 49, her life since high school in some respects has been a continuation of those earlier negative experiences. Married at 18, she and her husband had five children before they separated 16 years later and divorced three years after the separation.

After leaving school, Mary went to work in a movie theater selling tickets (She says "She was always good in math.") then she went to work on the production line of a potato-chip factory, then to a job counting currency at the Federal Reserve Bank, then to Chrysler Motors on the assembly line. She has remained with Chrysler since 1977, though she has been laid off and called back to work numerous times during that period. During some of the "lay off" periods, Mary worked as a checker for Meijer Thrifty Acres.

Equally frustrating to Mary have been her experiences in seeking help for her reading problems. During one period of "lay off" from Chrysler in which her unemployment benefits had expired, she decided to "do something" about her lack of reading skill. She tried vocational rehabilitation and came away frustrated, she tried a college counselor and received no help, and she tried a private for-profit reading clinic with little or no improvement in reading ability. Somewhere in this series of negative experiences, Mary was informed that she had dyslexia, and it was recommended that she consult a medical specialist. She now sees a specialist in New York State once a year, and is on

medication. She feels the medication contributes to what she believes are better physical balance, posture, motor skills and sense of well being. She also believes the medication "allows her to learn to read." Her scores on a standardized reading test tend to validate this improvement. Her grade level equivalency in reading has gone from about 1st to a little over 5th in the one and one half years she has been a participant in the Macomb Reading Partners.

Mary considers the successes of her children, which she raised alone, to be her major accomplishment. While encouraging and motivating them in their school work, Mary never let them know she was almost a non-reader until her youngest was a high school senior. Her children are achievers. Two have graduated from major universities, two are currently undergraduates in good universities, and the fifth owns and operates her own beauty salon. There is a closeness between Mary and her children that is to be respected and admired.

Mary is also an achiever. She has improved her own reading significantly. Through dieting and exercise she has lost a great deal of weight. She is concerned about her appearance, and always appears vivacious and attractive. She is very verbal and quite articulate, with an almost missionary zeal to help those who cannot read. As an advocate for the Macomb Reading Partners, she was featured on a video tape made by Chrysler Motors for use in their plants as an awareness and recruitment tool. Mary is currently enrolled in a computer applications course, yet she continues to work with her volunteer tutor. It is clear that she feels good about herself, and she indicated recently that she has "stronger religious feelings" since she started in the literacy program.

When asked about her goals for the future, Mary indicates that first she wants to help others who do not read, then become skilled in high tech so that she can "get off the line", and pass the GED exam. It is likely she will achieve all three, but by then she will have set new more ambitious goals.

B. Observations

1. The mean gain in reading grade level equivalency per month for the sample in this study was .204 (Table 4). This suggests that for every year in tutoring for the members of this sample the average gain was over two grade level equivalencies. The estimate of the Macomb Reading Partners staff is that all participants in the program show an average gain of 1.54 grade level equivalency for every forty hours of tutoring. They further estimate that a participant receives an average of five hours of actual tutoring per month. These estimates calculate to an average gain of .193 grade level equivalency per month. So the results of this study more than confirm the estimates of the program staff.
2. It appears clear that the lower the grade level equivalency of a participant at the point of entry into the program, the greater the average gain in grade level equivalency can be expected, with the possible exception of those who enter with a fifth grade level equivalency (Table 5). This observation should be treated with caution, and confirming data sought, since the sample size at some grade levels is very small.
3. Participants in this study in the 40-58 age range showed significantly higher average monthly gains in grade level equivalency than did those below age forty, with those in the 40-49 age range clearly showing the greatest gains (Table 6). These results may be because those in the 40-58 range have fewer conflicting demands on their time and can better concentrate on reading improvement.

4. The last school grade completed does not appear to be predictive of either reading grade level equivalency at the point of entry into this tutoring program or the average monthly gain in reading grade level equivalency which can be expected (Table 7). High school completion for this sample does not result in higher reading grade level equivalency than for those who withdrew from formal schooling prior to high school completion. Low literate adults who remained in school and received the high school diploma make up 43% of the sample for this study. This may suggest that those with high school diplomas are more apt to ask for reading help than those who withdrew. School drop-outs do not appear to be requesting help with their reading problems in significant numbers.
5. The average monthly gain in reading grade level equivalency for this sample was significantly higher for those in tutoring for ten months or less than for those in tutoring for thirteen months or more (Table 8). Generally, it can be observed that the longer one remains in tutoring the smaller the reading gains to be expected. There are at least two explanatory factors in this phenomenon. First, at the beginning of the program the participant is likely to be enthusiastic and highly motivated, which is usually a contributing factor in any learning situation. Unless gains continue the enthusiasm and motivation may decrease. Second, in the beginning the participant may be re-acquiring skills once held but lost. One would expect this would make learning easier in the early months of tutoring.

These results may also suggest that different methodological approaches and other types of motivational techniques may be in order for the participant who has been in the program for over one year.

6. When the participants in this study described the reading strategies they try to employ the results are very supportive of the methodologies used by the tutors in the program. When a person describes the strategies he or she uses when reading, a conception of what that person believes reading to be about emerges. The ratio of 12 meaning based conceptions of reading to four print based conceptions is very positive (pp 33-34). There is a considerable body of empirical evidence (Malicky and Norman, 1982; Norman and Malicky, 1987; Snoddy, 1984) to support the view that one significant aspect of maturity (proficiency) in reading is the understanding that reading is both first and last a meaning making process. To this observer, these results suggests the tutors in Macomb Reading Partners are using sound methodology in working with their partners.
7. The employment patterns of the participants in this study do not support the popular belief that low-literates are lazy (pp. 35-37). They hold jobs which are physically and emotionally demanding, and many hold second jobs. They do change jobs often, but tend to stay in the same lines of work. They appear to be frequently laid-off for either short or long periods, but when on "lay-off" often look to other sources of work for income.

8. A number of coping and concealing strategies were reported by the participants in the interviews (pp. 38-40). Two recommendations seem appropriate for these results. First, the concept of and specific examples of coping strategies should be incorporated into future tutor training efforts so that they are aware of this concept and what kinds of coping strategies to look for and support as adaptive and useful mechanisms for low-literate adults. Second, the concept of concealing strategies in low-literate adults along with specific example of ways these adults conceal the low-literacy skills should be shared with those agencies that routinely work with populations who have a high incidence of illiteracy and low-literacy such as the courts, the Department of Social Services, unemployment services and others.
9. The participants in this study reported frequent and diverse application of newly acquired literacy skills to their life roles (Tables 9 and 10). This improved literacy proficiency has a significant impact upon the lives of these adults. These personal successes appear to be a strong source of motivation for them to seek continued success.
10. Participation in the tutoring program is highly related to positive feelings (Table 11). Specific reasons for these feelings were grouped into six categories with improved literacy the most frequently cited reason and enhanced feelings of self confidence or self esteem a second significant factor. The low raw and weighted scores for the category of enhanced educational opportunity suggests that those who enter volunteer literacy programs are motivated more by success in skill attainment than

by a desire for continuation in the formal system of education. Also, a high percentage of the participants in this study hold high school diplomas. It may be that those adults who enroll in this volunteer literacy program may want to avoid the formal classroom even after their literacy skills improve.

11. The large number of participants who reported that they first learned of the literacy program through television suggests that to the extent that this source can be continued at low or minimal expense, it should be continued and expanded (Table 12).
12. The personal life changes and events which were reported by the participants of this study were incorporated into a research paper by Snoddy and DeVergilio and reported at the 1990 Mid West Research-To-Practice Conference in Adult and Continuing Education at Northern Illinois University. See Appendix C.

C. Conclusion

This literacy program has a very positive and powerful impact on the participants. Through the program they improve their literacy skills, they apply them to their regular life roles, and they feel better about themselves because of their successes. Those who tutor, those who are tutored, those who provide support for the program and those who staff and direct the program deserve our highest accolades and congratulations.

V. A Personal Note

In conducting this research, I spent a fair number of hours in the facilities of Macomb Reading Partners. In addition to the interviews of the study participants, on many occasions I talked to and worked with the Director of the Program, other staff members, tutors, other program participants, and staff members of the Macomb County Library. I conclude this report with many positive feelings, which are expressed throughout the report, including a very optimistic belief that many people do care about others in our society and are putting their time and energy into that concern. I want to express my thanks to all of you who made this research possible through your assistance and encouragement. Without you, I could not have completed it.

Thanks also to Lorraine Hull, Michigan State University, for her work in preparing materials of the study and this final report.

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VII
Tables and Figures

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VII Appendices

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- C. Life Transitions and Trigger Events Leading to Participation in a
Volunteer Literacy Program - Snoddy and DeVergilio

PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

I. NAME: _____ PHONE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

AGE: _____ MARITAL STATUS S M D

CHILDREN: NAMES/AGES _____

SPOUSE'S EMPLOYMENT _____

FAMILY INCOME _____

FIRST LANGUAGE - ENGLISH _____

OTHER _____

SECOND LANGUAGE - ENGLISH _____

OTHER _____

II. WORK

PROMOTIONS _____

LAY OFFS _____

APPLICATIONS FOR JOBS _____

RETRAINING PROGRAMS _____

UNION ACTIVITY _____

CLASSIFIED ADS _____

APPLICATIONS _____

MILITARY _____

III. HOME

CHILDREN _____

HOMEWORK _____

SHOPPING

RESTAURANTS _____

STORES _____

CLOTHING SIZES _____

GROCERY _____

CHANGE _____

HEALTH

PRESCRIPTIONS _____

BOTTLES DIRECTIONS _____

INSURANCE FORMS _____

CHURCH

MEMBER _____

ATTENDANCE _____

BILLS

CREDIT CARDS _____

MAIL _____

REFERENCE MATERIALS

PHONE BOOK _____

COOKING _____

NOTES/LETTERS/MAIL _____

IV. PERSONAL

EDUCATIONAL HISTORY _____

TEACHERS _____

ABE/TRAINING PROGRAMS _____

SIGNIFICANT OTHERS _____

SELF ESTEEM _____

FEELINGS _____

ATTITUDES _____

BELIEFS _____

PERCEPTIONS OF OTHERS _____

TRANSITIONS/TRIGGERS _____

SELF DIRECTION _____

INDEPENDENT LEARNING _____

ACHIEVEMENTS _____

V. COMMUNITY

VOTE/REGISTERED _____

CHILDREN'S SCHOOL _____

PTO _____

P/T CONFERENCES _____

ROOM PARENT _____

EXTRA CURRICULAR _____

BOOSTERS _____

APPLICATIONS

DRIVER'S LICENSE _____ AUTO PLATES _____

LIBRARY CARD _____ USE _____

TRANSPORTATION

MAPS _____

STREET NAMES _____

SCHEDULES _____

VI. RECREATION/LEISURE

FREETIME _____

FAMILY RECREATION _____

SPORTS _____

OUT-OF-DOORS _____

TV _____

READING _____

VII. TUTORING PROGRAM/ADULT BASIC EDUCATION

WHEN ENTERED _____

WHY _____

TUTOR(S) _____

EXTENT OF PARTICIPATION _____

READING ACHIEVEMENT

<u>ENTRY</u>	<u>MEASURE #2</u>	<u>#3</u>	<u>#4</u>	<u>#5</u>
DATE _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
GLE _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
INST. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Questions:

- 8

FUNCTIONAL LITERACY APPLICATIONS

READING	COMMENTS
☐ MAIL	_____
☐ MENU	_____
☐ NEWSPAPER	_____
☐ MEDICINE BOTTLE LABELS	_____
☐ TELEPHONE DIRECTORY	_____
☐ APPLICATION FORMS	_____
☐ STREET AND TRAFFIC SIGNS	_____
☐ APARTMENT/HOUSING LEASES	_____
☐ BUS, PLANE, TRAIN SCHEDULE	_____
☐ BIBLE	_____
☐ NOTES FROM SCHOOL	_____
☐ BILLS	_____
☐ JOB MANUALS	_____
☐ BOOKS TO CHILDREN	_____
☐ TV GUIDE	_____
☐ MAGAZINES	_____
☐ RECIPES	_____
WRITING	
☐ VOTING	_____
☐ INSURANCE FORMS	_____
☐ NOTES TO SCHOOL	_____
☐ SHOPPING LIST	_____
☐ JOB APPLICATIONS	_____
☐ JOB REPORTS	_____

COMPUTATION AND MEASUREMENT

COMMENTS

- ___ COMPARE PRICES
- ___ BUDGETING MONEY
- ___ COUPON SHOPPING
- ___ THERMOMETER
- ___ RECIPES
- ___ INCOME TAX FORMS
- ___ SLIDE RULE, RULER, ETC.
- ___ CHECKING ACCOUNT

FREE RESPONSES

RANK ORDER

PROMPTS

ACADEMIC IMPROVEMENT
SELFESTEEM/CONFIDENCE
GED/HS DIPLOMA
JOB RELATED BENEFITS
INTERPERSONAL SKILLS
SOCIAL ASPECTS/NETWORKING

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION
ERICKSON HALL

EAST LANSING • MICHIGAN • 48824-1034

July 18, 1989

Dear:

We are interviewing a number of people who have been in the Macomb County Literacy Program. We hope the information we gain will help us make the program better in the future. We want to find out if the skills you learned in the program have helped you in your daily life.

We will be asking you about your work life, your family life, your church, life, your recreational life, your children's school activities if you have children, and other things which you may want to talk about. If there are questions which you do not want to answer you do not have to answer them. We will stop our interview any time you wish.

We may want to use the information you and others tell us to write an article to appear in newspapers and magazines. Your name will not appear in this article, and any information you give us will be combined with the information from others.

If you have any questions about this letter, please ask either of us and we will try to answer them.

Thank you.

Sincerely,


James E. Snoddy, Professor
Michigan State University


Marsha DeVergillio, Coordinator
Macomb Literacy Project

JES/MD/lh

I agree to be a part of this study under the conditions described above.

Signature

Date

**LIFE TRANSITIONS AND TRIGGER EVENTS LEADING TO PARTICIPATION
IN A VOLUNTEER LITERACY PROGRAM**

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Abstract

Participants in a volunteer literacy program were sampled using a structured interview and a reading achievement test. The purpose was to attempt to determine their motivations for seeking entry into the literacy program. Findings were compared to those of Aslanian and Brickell in terms of life transitions and triggering events.

Seventy-six percent of those in this study described their motivations for seeking entry into the program in terms of life transitions and triggering events. Of this 76%, 55% reported economic and/or employment changes, 23% cited changes in family lives, and 23% cited changes in their health as reasons for seeking entry.

Other participants reported being urged by family members, having their participation mandated by social agencies, or trying this program as one in a series of efforts to get help with their reading problems.

Reading grade level equivalency gains over the tutoring period support the participants' reported motivations to improve reading proficiency.

LIFE TRANSITIONS AND TRIGGER EVENTS LEADING TO PARTICIPATION IN A VOLUNTEER LITERACY PROGRAM

This research examines the reported motivations of adult low-literates who seek entry into a volunteer tutoring literacy program. Aslanian and Brickell's (1980) constructs of life transitions and triggering events were used as a framework for identifying these reported motivations.

Significance of the Research

Those involved in adult literacy efforts are aware of the large numbers of adult illiterates and low-literates who do not seek assistance with their literacy problems. In many volunteer literacy programs trained tutors are anxious to begin working with adult students, but there are not enough adults seeking tutoring to utilize all available tutors. A major problem for practitioners is one of recruitment. How can these adults be reached in meaningful ways?

Aslanian and Brickell (1980) found that adults who are involved in life transitions and trigger events tend to seek learning experiences at the point in time when a trigger event such as divorce, a new job, being laid off from work or acute illness marks a life transition. Their research involved a sample of 1519 who were widely distributed by age, family annual income, employment status, occupation, marital status, race, gender, place of residence and others. If the findings of Aslanian and Brickell hold for adult illiterates and low-literates, there are implications for both volunteer literacy program recruitment efforts as well as program planning and instructional strategy selection and application.

Research Questions

Two major research questions were developed to guide the study, both of which included specific sub-questions which were more researchable than the larger more general questions.

- A. What are the motivations reported by low-literate adults for entering a volunteer literacy program?
 1. To what extent do low-literate adults report life transitions and triggering events as reasons for seeking entry into a volunteer literacy program?
 2. What types of life transitions and triggering events are reported by these adults?
 3. What other reasons (motivations) do these adults give for seeking entry into a volunteer literacy program?
- B. What are the levels of literacy of the adults in this study?
 1. What were the reading grade level equivalencies of the participants in the study at the point of entry into the tutoring program?
 2. What were the gains in reading grade level equivalency during participation in the tutoring program?

Setting for the Study

The setting for the study was a volunteer literacy program in a large urban/suburban county in a mid western metropolitan complex. Started in 1984, the stated primary missions of the program include providing literacy training to adults at or below the fifth grade reading level; raising community awareness of the problems of illiteracy; and establishing a firm base of support in the community. By early 1990, there were more than 550 teams of volunteer tutor/adult student pairs working together under the auspices of this program.

Methodology for the Study

The study was conducted during the period of August, 1989 to August, 1990 with a data collection period of August, 1989 through April, 1990.

Research Sample

With an interview procedure developed for data collection, a relatively small sample was selected. It was felt that a sample of 30 would be reflective of the population of all participants in this volunteer literacy program and permit a limited comparison of any sub groups within the sample. A series of criteria were applied in selecting the sample. These criteria follow.

A. Length of Time in the Program

Only those who had been in the program for six months or more were included. Six months was felt to be the minimum time needed for the Botel test to reflect any improvement in reading proficiency.

B. Exceptional Adults

Adults whose English proficiency was limited, those who were mentally and/or emotionally impaired, those who were auditorily and/or visually impaired, and those with severe neurological or muscular disorders were excluded from the sample.

C. Availability and Willingness to Participate

From the list of program participants who remained after the first two criteria were applied, participants were selected randomly. They were contacted by phone and asked to participate in the study. This procedure was continued until 30 agreed to participate.

Data Collection Procedures

Three sources of data were used, a structured interview, The Word Opposites Test of the Botel Reading Inventory (1962), and the adult student files which were maintained by the program staff.

A. Structured Interview

A protocol to guide the interviews was developed to assure that every participant was ask identical questions, and to limit the number and nature of the prompts provided. Four pilot interviews were conducted with adult students in the program. The

protocol was slightly revised as a result of the interviewer's experiences in the pilot interviews.

B. Word Opposites Test

Since all of the adult students in the program are routinely administered the Word Opposites Test of the Botel Reading Inventory (1962) upon entry and at six month intervals, it was decided to use the results of this test as measures of reading proficiency. This test was reviewed separately by both Aaron (1965) and by Brown (1965) in the Sixth Mental Measurements Yearbook edited by Buros (1965). The following comments about the Word Opposites Test reflect the observations in these two reviews.

This test is designed to give an estimate of word comprehension at levels primer through senior high school. Raw scores are converted to grade level equivalencies according to percentages of correct matches of item words and their opposites. Unfortunately, the Botel Reading Inventory includes no information on test validity and reliability. However, Aaron believes that the actual experiences of teachers and reading specialists support the standards set forth for the test. A major strength of the test lies in its ease of administration. It can be taken quickly, and requires only a single form which includes both the test and spaces for responses. Scoring can also be done rapidly. Since this test was a regular part of the tutoring program, it was decided to report the results in this study.

C. Program Participant Files

These files contain demographic information about each participant, as well as a history of his or her tutoring experiences. Results of regular administration of the Word Opposites Test are recorded in these files. The files of the participants in the research sample were read carefully as one means of validation of information gained through interviews.

Following the series of criteria set for sample selection, program participants were first contacted by a person who was a well known adult student in the program. He explained the purposes of the study, what a participant would be required to do, and sought consent to participate. If an oral agreement was secured, an interview was scheduled to be held in the offices of the literacy program. Interviews were conducted in a private place, either an office, or a conference room. Extensive notes were taken by the researcher, and the interviews were not taped. It was felt the participants would be more comfortable and speak more freely in the absence of a tape recorder.

Informed consent was obtained at the beginning of the interview, and a signed consent form was obtained from each person in the sample.

The interviews averaged slightly over one hour. The participants were generally friendly and cooperative, with only two appearing to be cautious. Over all, the interviews went very smoothly and yielded a great deal of data.

Date Analysis

Data collected were of both qualitative and quantitative natures. Those data which yielded well to quantitative analysis are reported in the forms of frequency counts, measures of central tendency and general comparisons. Qualitative reporting takes the forms of quotations, expressions of attitudes and perceptions, and summaries of findings.

Findings

The findings are reported here in terms of the two general research questions.

- A. What are the motivations low-literate adults report for entering a volunteer literacy program?

Aslanian and Brickell (1980) found that adults seek learning experiences when they are involved in life changes, and that there are specific triggering events which mark these transitions and cause adults to seek learning experiences. The participants in this study were asked to talk about changes in their lives which caused them to seek tutorial assistance through this program. Twenty-nine of the 30 participants were able to give specific reasons why they decided to enter the program, and why they entered when they did. Of these 29 who discussed their motivations for entering, 22 talked in terms of life changes (transitions) with specific events (triggers) while 7 described their motivations using other concepts. So for this study, 76% reported a life change as the reason for seeking a learning experience while Aslanian and Brickell found 83% citing life changes in their larger study. Twelve or 55% of those in this study reported life changes in the economic or employment life area while Aslanian and Brickell found 56% of their respondents cited changes in this life area. Five or 23% of the participants in this study described life changes in their families, compared to 16% in Aslanian and Brickell's study. In this study there were also 5 (23%) who cited changes in their health compared to 4% in the Aslanian and Brickell research. None of the participants in this study reported changes in the life areas of leisure, art, religion or citizenship as reasons for seeking entry.

Of the seven participants in this study who described reasons for entering the tutoring program other than life changes and events, three talked about being urged by family members and friends, two indicated that participation in a tutorial literacy program was one alternative offered them if they were to continue to receive social services, and two reported that this program was the most recent in a series of attempts to get help with their reading problems.

- B. What are the levels of literacy of the adults in this study?

The number of months the participants were involved in tutoring ranged from 5 months to 35 months. The range in reading grade level equivalency at the point of entry into the program was from primer (0) to 5th. The range in reading grade level equivalency at the point of the latest six month administration of the Word Opposites Test was from 2nd to 8th. The range of gains in

grade level equivalency was from 1 year to 5 years, with a mean gain of 2.1 years.

Discussion

The constructs of life transitions with triggering events do seem helpful in explaining and understanding why the sample of low-literate adults in this study sought help in improving their reading. While there were some differences in the percentages reported in this study and those reported by Aslanian and Brickell, the similarities are more striking than are the differences. Tutors who work with low-literate adults should be sensitive to those life changes and events. Instructional materials and tasks which can facilitate these transitions, and facilitate the adult's adjustment in a new life status might not only improve his or her reading proficiency and increase competency in life roles, but also improve self concept and self esteem.

In the interviews, nine participants described transitions in their lives they would like to make, but had not been successful. This is approximately 41% of those who were able to identify transitions and triggers as reasons for entering the program. One example of a desired transition came from a woman who was a house keeper in a hospital but wanted to be a licensed practical nurse. She felt her reading proficiency was inadequate to complete the training program. Another example came from a man who was denied the opportunity to re-enlist in the military because of his literacy level. While he had undergone a transition (soldier to civilian) he wanted to return to the soldier status. The notion of desired life transitions appears to be a major motivational factor among the low-literates in this sample, as supported by their perseverance in the literacy program and increased reading proficiency.

References

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Table 1 Participants Literacy Levels and Gains

Participant Sequence Number (n=30)	Months of Tutoring (1)	Entry GLE (2)	Last GLE	Total GLE Gain
1.	9	0	2	2
2.	21	3	6	3
3.	9	2	4	2
4.	30	3	8	5
5.	16	4	6	2
6.	14	1	4	3
7.	6	3	4	1
8.	9	0	2	2
9.	15	2	4	2
10.	6	3	4	1
11.	13	2	3	1
12.	10	2	3	1
13.	5(3)	1	5	4
14.		Incomplete measures		
15.	6	2	4	2
16.	22	5	8	3
17.	21	3	5	2
18.	17	4	6	2
19.	8	3	4	1
20.	10	5	8	3
21.	35	3	6	3
22.	8	2	5	3
23.	15	1	3	2
24.	8	2	4	2
25.	10	3	5	2
26.	13	3	4	1
27.	5(3)	5	8	3
28.	8	3	4	1
29.	8	5	6	1
30.	22	3	5	2

(1) Represents the number of months between the beginning of tutoring and the month of the most recent Botel Word Opposites Test result.

(2) GLE - Grade level Equivalency on the Word Opposites Test.

(3) Sample participants 13 and 27 met the criterion of 6 months in the program, but each missed one month of tutoring during that period.

Table 2

Live Transitions and Triggering Events
by Life Area (n=22)

Life Area - Career (Economic and Employment) n=12 (55%)

<u>Status 1</u>	<u>Trigger</u>	<u>Status 2</u>
1 Laborer	(Failed written test)	Boiler-operator (desired)
2 Soldier	(Denied re-enlistment)	Civilian (occurred)
3 Homemaker	(Application for housewares dealership denied)	Small business person (desired)
4 Hospital housekeeper	(In interview to enter training program, she was told she would need better reading skills.)	Licensed practical nurse (desired)
5 Laborer	(Supervisor recommended a literacy program.)	Skilled trades person (desired)
6 Manually controlled machine operator	(Installation of machinery controlled by a computer. Job transfer)	Yard laborer (occurred)
7 Drafting specialists' assistant	(Company offered to send her to drafting school. She turned it down out of fear.)	Drafting specialist (desired)
8 Assembly line worker	(Promotion)	Supervisor (occurred)
9 Junior partner in a small business involving largely manual labor.	(?)	Small business person in a retail outlet. (desired)
10 Plant maintenance job	(Promotion)	Weighmaster (occurred)
11 Assembly line worker	(Sent to out of town for two week training program. He couldn't keep up so he dropped out.)	Foreman (desired)
12 Catering business supervisor	(Discussion with her husband in which he told her he would not finance her until she could read better.)	Own and operate her own catering business (desired)

Life Area - Family n=5 (23%)

<u>Status 1</u>	<u>Trigger</u>	<u>Status 2</u>
1 Boy/Girl friend	(Engagement)	Engaged (occurred)
2 Parent of a young school child who does not have homework.	(Child is assigned homework.)	Parent of a school child who brings home school work. (occurred)
3 Mother of an infant	(Son enters kindergarten)	Mother of a young child (occurred)
4 Mother of young school children	(Youngest child enters junior high school)	Mother of adolescents (occurred)
5 Mother of school age children	(Youngest child graduates from high school)	Empty-nester (occurred)

Life Area - Health n=5 (23%)

<u>Status 1</u>	<u>Trigger</u>	<u>Status 2</u>
1-4 Employed as a laborer	(Laid off for medical/health reasons)	Unemployed (occurred) Employed in work which is less physically demanding (desired)
5 Employed as a laborer	(?)	Employed in work which is less physically demanding. (desired)

**Life Transitions and Trigger Events Leading to Participation
in A Volunteer Literacy Program**

Implications

1. These findings should be shared with other human service providers that refer adults to the literacy program. These agencies include the Department of Social Services, the Employment Security Commission and the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation.
2. These findings should be shared with other human service providers to whom these adults are referred when they leave the literacy program. These agencies include adult basic education and high school completion programs, vocational education providers, JTPA programs, community colleges and others.
3. These adults are seeking solutions to real life problems. Tutors need to be aware of the specific problems their adult partners are trying to solve, and strategies need to be developed to assist tutors with a problem solving approach to tutoring.
4. Literacy program staffs should carefully evaluate the need to establish an assessment and tutorial program in simple mathematics. The same need probably also exists in the area of functional writing.